



## Youth, Education and Peacebuilding

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# Engaging Youth in Planning Education for Social Transformation

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## Youth, Education, and Peacebuilding

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## **List of abbreviations**

TVET	Technical and vocational skills training
UN	United Nations
UNICEF	UN Children's Emergency Fund
UNDP	UN Development Programme
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WHO	World Health Organization

# 1. Introduction

Youth tend to be naturally idealistic, creative, and energetic. They are positioned to play a very important role in managing conflicts and differences. Where they are given adequate opportunities for positive involvement, they can be critical to ensuring longer-term stability, producing effective outcomes within communities, and offering protection from future conflicts (AED, 2005:4).

The Seventh UNESCO Youth Forum brought together more than 500 youth voices from across the world to debate ‘How youth drive change’, and acknowledged the role youth play in ‘positively transforming society’ (UNESCO, 2011: 2). The 2012 Policy Forum, *Engaging Youth in Planning Education for Social Transformation*, builds on these debates. Emerging from a partnership between the UNESCO International Institute for Educational Planning (IIEP) and two UNESCO Chairs from the National University of Ireland, Galway, and the University of Ulster, this Policy Forum will address the three thematic areas in youth engagement discussed by the 2011 UNESCO youth delegates. This brief paper is aimed at a broad range of stakeholders (including youth delegates, policymakers, and planners) on the literature and theory relevant to one of these core areas: the role of youth and education in supporting societal transformation through peacebuilding in conflict-affected societies.

The paper begins by highlighting different definitions of ‘youth’, before identifying four reasons why it is important to prioritize youth analysis in any conflict setting. The third section introduces a number of concepts and definitions related to conflict and peacebuilding, including the important distinction between conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding. The fourth section identifies a number of theories that have examined linkages between youth, education, and conflict. The final section suggests three critical questions for policymakers in an attempt to stimulate discussion and debate about the extent to which youth programming can promote peacebuilding through social, economic, and political change.

## 1.1. What does ‘youth’ mean?

One of the persistent obstacles in work with youth is defining who they are. Many organizations and agencies have adopted a definition in line with their mandate, mostly accompanied by an age range. However, there are a number of problems with this approach.

First, the age ranges differ. The United Nations (UN) defines those aged between 15 and 24 as youth; this is the most common age range used, and is advocated by the UN Children’s Emergency Fund (UNICEF), the World Bank, the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and the International Youth Foundation. The African Union extends the definition to include those aged between 15 and 35 years. The draft United States Agency for International Development (USAID) youth policy, due out in the autumn of 2012, defines youth as those persons between 10 and 29 years of age (USAID, 2012a). There is also variation among international agencies, such as Save the Children’s age range of 13 to 25 (Sommers, 2001: 3).

Second, to complicate matters further, the concepts of youth, adolescence, and young people also vary. The World Health Organization (WHO) uses three categories: adolescent for those aged 10 to 19, whilst those aged 15 to 24 are defined as youth, and the term young people covers all those aged between 10 and 24.

Third, in many parts of the world youth is not determined by age but by factors such as achieving economic independence, leaving the parental home, getting married, and having children. Therefore, another way of understanding youth is as a *transitional stage in life between childhood and adulthood*. This allows for the exploration of the specific factors that determine the transition into adulthood in different contexts.

In fact, defining youth in terms of chronological age is arguably even less appropriate in conflict situations than elsewhere. Youth are often thrust into adult roles earlier than would be the case in times of peace. They might, for example, find themselves heading households in the event of parental death and displacement. Conflict also causes difficulties for the sociocultural definition of youth, since the traditional markers of the transition into adulthood are often disrupted. Furthermore, the very concept can become heavily politicized: young activists call themselves children to avoid punishment, while authorities call them ‘youth’ to make them legally culpable (Kemper, 2005: 10). It is also important, particularly in conflict settings, to avoid ‘youth’ becoming used as shorthand for ‘young men who pose a potential threat’. ‘Young women can be invisible and doubly disadvantaged, and are left out of many youth-focused interventions in part because they are not perceived as a threat’ (McLean Hilker and Fraser, 2009).



## **2. Why prioritize youth?**

People under 25 make up 43 per cent of the world's population, but the percentage reaches 60 per cent in the least-developed countries (UNFPA, 2011: 8). The sheer numbers alone justify their inclusion and consideration in policymaking and planning. Beyond this, there are a number of reasons that it is essential to consider youth as distinct actors in conflict-affected societies.

### **2.1. Youth are disproportionately affected by conflict**

In 1996 the Machel Report highlighted the devastating impact of armed conflict on children, adolescents, and youth. Recommended responses include the education of refugees and displaced persons, strategies to prevent the use of child soldiers, protection for girls against sex crimes, and the provision of landmine education and trauma counselling. From 1996 to 2012 there has been an increasing recognition and documentation of these impacts. However, the recent *Global Monitoring Report 2011* (UNESCO-EFA, 2011) clearly highlights that the effects of conflict continue to have a devastating impact on the education of children and youth.

Globally, 28 million children, almost half of the children out of school, are in conflict affected countries (UNESCO-EFA, 2011). They lose out on the physical, psychosocial, and cognitive protection that education provides. Reports also indicate that children and schools are increasingly on the front line of armed conflicts, with classrooms, teachers, and pupils seen as legitimate targets (O'Malley, 2010). Adding to the disadvantage, social systems and structures, including the labour market, are often seriously eroded by years of violence, and are less able to absorb and offer young people meaningful opportunities in life.

Youth are also likely to be represented in the ranks of armed groups and state armies. Here there are two sets of literature. The first relates to the forced recruitment of child soldiers, and understandably espouses the need for protective measures. The UN Secretary General's report to the Security Council, covering 15 countries, identifies 57 groups recruiting child soldiers (United Nations, 2010). The second refers to the 'threat' posed by male youth who are thought to be easily mobilized by rebel leaders. This has been associated with an increasing demonization of youth in the media (Hendrixson, 2004; Sommers, 2006), but it does reflect the view that youth 'provide much of the crucial energy and mass power to get wheels turning for divergent "vehicles" of social and political change' (Hamilton, 2010: 4).

### **2.2. Youth are key actors in peacebuilding**

Much less attention has been paid to the peacebuilding activities of youth than to their violence. McEvoy-Levy states:

In any conflict context one examines, the dominant presence of the young in community development, and in inter-ethnic dialogue and peace groups is clear. Many have direct experience of violence, conflict and imprisonment themselves. They are not well paid, their projects are under-funded, often stressful and can be life threatening. Like other civil society actors they are less visible in analysis of peace processes than key elites (McEvoy-Levy, 2001: 24-25).

As the 'primary actors in grassroots community development work', McEvoy-Levy argues youth are 'at the frontlines of peacebuilding' (2001: 24), and claims that policymakers and scholars have not adequately explored the positive contribution made by youth. This shortfall

is acknowledged by the 2007 *World Development Report* (World Bank, 2007) which focused attention on the needs and transformative potential of the ‘next generation’ in development. However, much of the literature has been generated by development agencies, such as a report on youth as a catalyst for peace which concluded that:

Youth are more likely to avoid violence and engage in peacebuilding if they are granted a specific set of opportunities, interrelated and mutually reinforcing, which we call *threshold conditions for peacebuilding*: Engaging in political participation; Forging connections between youth and their communities; Building constituencies for peace; Training youth for the workplace; and building youth confidence and self-esteem (AED, 2005: 5).

### **2.3. Youth are undergoing important transitions**

Irrespective of whether it is defined by chronological age or socially constructed roles, youth is a period during which individuals undergo a number of important transitions. It is a difficult period under the best circumstances. During times of conflict, however, many youth can be stuck in ‘waithood’ (Singerman 2007: 6), unable to make the transition into adulthood. For example, during conflict unemployment often affects youth more than any other group, and the frustrations generated can last well beyond the end of the war. During conflict youth therefore have specific needs that require analysis and attention. As Hamilton states, ‘Youth voices tend to go unheard by political and economic leaders (even by social scientists) unless they are raised as a revolutionary cry or as an articulated threat to the social order’ (2010: 7).

### **2.4. Youth are often overlooked**

Some agencies are now beginning to prioritize youth analysis in conflict situations. USAID (2012a) has recently produced a review of the latest research on youth education in crisis and conflict-affected settings. This paper is based on a literature review of 27 publicly available studies that were published between 2001 and 2012 on the topics of youth education in crisis and conflict-affected environments; formal, non-formal, and informal education; school-to-work transition; peace-building and conflict resolution; youth engagement, participation, and empowerment; workforce development and livelihoods. The paper identifies 14 donors with ‘youth in conflict and crisis settings’ as a programmatic focus area. These comprise six bilateral agencies, one multilateral agency, three UN agencies, and four foundations. However, the paper draws attention to the lack of youth-focused research, with only five of the 14 organizations identifying this as a priority. The USAID report concludes, ‘there needs to be more rigorous research’ (2012a: 19). This echoes findings by many scholars (Del Felice and Wisler, 2007; Hamilton, 2010; Sommers, 2006). The diversity of roles played and the issues specific to this group ‘necessitates conflict-specific and deeply ethnographic approaches to the study of youth in post-war situations’ (McEvoy-Levy. 2001: 9).

### 3. Conflict and peacebuilding: some conceptual distinctions

**Conflict** is often used as a synonym for violence. However, Galtung (1976) argues that although conflict may lead to violence, it is conceptually totally different. ‘There are different ways of looking at conflict. It can be viewed negatively as a fight or incompatibility of goals. It can be seen as a positive opportunity for individuals to express their goals and become aware of differences. Conflict can also be viewed as simply a natural part of life and relationships (Del Felice and Wisler 2007: 6). Violence, on the other hand, is just one way of dealing with conflict. It is destructive and generates trauma. Galtung distinguishes between three forms of violence. *Direct violence* refers to physical injury inflicted on another human being. *Structural violence* is more indirect, is built into the structures of society, and shows up as social injustice and unequal life chances. *Cultural violence* involves any cultural norms, beliefs, and traditions that make other types of violence seem legitimate, accepted, normal, or natural. For example, physical punishment of children, violence against women, and attacks on other religious or ethnic groups are often portrayed as justifiable ‘traditional practices’. These distinctions are important as it is often only direct violence that is addressed because it is more visible, while deeper structural and cultural violence remains.

#### 3.1. Peacebuilding and conflict transformation

Galtung argued that peacebuilding ‘has a structure different from, perhaps over and above, peacekeeping and ad hoc peacemaking’ (1976: 297). He introduced an important distinction between negative peace (the absence of violence) and positive peace (the absence of structural violence and the conditions for war). He also highlighted the importance of local knowledge and participation. This understanding of peacebuilding as the attempt to remove root causes of war (the structural and cultural violence that feed into direct violence), and support indigenous strategies for peace, has been influential in the development of ‘conflict analysis’, which is used by many development agencies to identify drivers and address root causes of conflict and violence.

The United Nations has struggled to define and operationalize the concept of peacebuilding. It was not until the publication of *An Agenda for Peace* in 1992 (Boutros-Ghali, 1992) that *post-conflict peacebuilding* was officially introduced into UN language. The concept was defined as ‘an action to identify and support structures which will tend to strengthen and solidify peace in order to avoid a relapse into conflict’, and was linked to, but distinguished from, preventative diplomacy (actions to prevent the outbreak of war), peacemaking (halting war by bringing parties to the negotiation table), and peacekeeping (providing security through the deployment of UN forces). In 1995 the *Supplement to An Agenda for Peace* (United Nations, 1995) expanded the concept of peacebuilding to include all conflict phases, and more emphasis was placed on creating structures for the institutionalization of peace.

Lederach (1997) emphasized that peacebuilding is ‘more than post-agreement reconstruction’, and involves a wide range of activities that occur both before and after formal peace agreements. He conceived of peacebuilding as a dynamic social process, and introduced the term *conflict transformation*, which he defined as an ‘ongoing process of change from negative to positive relations, behaviour, attitudes and structures’ (1997: 20). Transformation is central to this process: Cultivating an infrastructure for peacebuilding, as he called it, means that ‘we are not merely interested in “ending” something that is not desired. We are oriented toward the building of relationships that in their totality form new patterns, processes, and structures’ (1997: 84–85).

One of the criticisms of UN peacebuilding has been the priority it gives to security, political, and economic transformations – not that these are unimportant, but that they tend to address the concerns of ‘elites’ and powerful groups in conflict situations. This often means that ‘peace dividends’ from social development are not visible to disadvantaged local communities which have borne the brunt of violence. A number of agencies such as UNICEF are now focusing programming on the role of education in peacebuilding (UNICEF, 2011). A key distinction between conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding is that conflict sensitivity places an emphasis on making sure that programming does not exacerbate conflict, while peacebuilding places more emphasis on the role that programming can play in supporting conflict transformation (Woodrow and Chigas, 2008).

**Table 1 Conflict sensitivity and conflict transformation**

Conflict sensitivity	Conflict transformation
Refers to the ability of an organization to: a) understand the context in which it is operating b) understand the interaction between the intervention and that context c) act upon that understanding, in order to avoid negative impacts and maximize positive impacts on conflict (Barbero et al., 2004)	Focuses on the relationships and transactions between the parties in the midst of or previously engaged in a given conflict; addresses wider, social, economic, and political sources of a conflict; and seeks to transform negative energy and war into positive social change. (McCandless and Bangura, 2007; Fisher et al., 2000)

Conflict analysis is the starting point for both, but the emphasis that may be possible or desirable will be highly dependent on the context. *The How To Guide to Conflict Sensitivity* (Conflict Sensitivity Consortium, 2012) provides a comprehensive overview of implications of a conflict sensitive approach for assessment, design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation, as well as tools for assessing institutional capacity and issues needing particular attention as part of emergency responses.

## 4. Theoretical links between education, youth, and peacebuilding

This is a complex area with imprecise definitions of terms and many variables, so it is difficult to demonstrate correlations never mind causality; implementation in the field is mainly undertaken by development agencies whose main priority is quick impact rather than systematic research; the volatile environments in conflict-affected societies mean that operational conditions and data gathering are difficult; short programme cycles, high levels of staff mobility and poor institutional memory make reflective research uncommon; and even where there is a commitment to evaluation this is most commonly defined in terms of indicators of achieving programme goals, rather than focusing on impact in terms of the concept of peacebuilding (Smith *et al.*, 2011).

Despite the difficulties mentioned by Smith and colleagues, the research literature highlights a number of hypotheses about the linkages between education, youth, and conflict. Each goes beyond explanations involving the features of the formal education system such as curriculum or teaching methods. They provide explanations in terms of the broader role of education in conflict-affected societies.

### 4.1. Social and cultural theories

A main social hypothesis is that conflict is generated out of grievances based on 'horizontal inequalities' between cultural groups (Stewart, 2008). This is consistent with research by Ostby (2008) which found that conflict rose significantly for countries with sharp social and economic inequalities. Gurr (1970) placed an emphasis on perceived 'relative deprivation' between groups (even where data suggest that inequalities do not exist), and especially where inequalities such as access to education have perceived 'social significance'. The implications are that education programmes involving youth should be particularly concerned with equality issues between groups within society, especially in terms of access to education, resource inputs, and actual and perceived benefits to different groups in terms of education outcomes. It is important to understand the social significance of education for different communities (for example, in terms of status within society and relevance for livelihoods), and to have the capacity to generate disaggregated data for monitoring and evaluation of education policies involving youth.

There are also those who argue that it is fundamental incompatibilities between cultures that lead to violent conflict and war. The most prominent proponent of this view is Huntington (1993, 1996), who argued that a 'clash of civilizations' has emerged particularly in the post-cold war period because of several factors including:

- the increased interaction among peoples of different civilizations;
- the de-westernization and indigenization of elites in non-western states;
- increased economic regionalization, which heightens civilization consciousness;
- a global resurgence of religious identity, which is replacing diminishing local and state-based identities (Henderson and Tucker, 2001: 318).

It is important to note that the notion of fundamental incompatibilities between cultures is strongly challenged by those who refute the idea that cultural differences are the root cause of violent conflict. They argue rather that identity factors such as language, culture, and religion are ways of mobilizing people to become involved in violent conflicts that have deeper political and economic roots in the context of global power relations (Duffield, 2001).

## 4.2. Economic explanations

One economic hypothesis is that youth participation in conflict is more likely where conflict involves a higher economic opportunity cost than existing income or income opportunities. It is based mainly on research by Collier and Hoeffler (2000, 2004), who used three main ‘proxies’ to measure the opportunity cost of participating in civil conflict across a number of countries. The first two proxies were mean income *per capita* (a population with high income may have more to lose from conflict) and growth rate of the economy (with high growth there are more employment opportunities). The third proxy indicator was the male secondary school enrolment rate. Collier and Hoeffler argued that young males are the group from which rebels are most recruited, the number of years of secondary education affects earning potential, and therefore having more years of schooling is likely to affect the opportunity cost of participating in conflict. This characterizes ‘greed’ as the main driver of conflict, and has been challenged as being overly simplistic and dependent on a ‘rational choice’ theory of human behavior (Ballentine and Sherman, 2003). Nevertheless, arguments based on macro-economic analysis do suggest that in crisis and conflict-affected environments education programming needs to focus more on secondary education for youth in and out of school, the role of technical and vocational education, and the relevance of education to employment opportunities and economic development.

Another economic dimension explains conflict in terms of underlying causes, such as ‘resource wars’ involving struggles over land, natural resources, and commodities (Allen and Thomas, 2000; Bardhan, 1997). From this perspective inequalities created by extraction of natural resources may generate resentments that fuel conflict arising from a sense of injustice. There are arguments that ‘environment and natural resources’ is a distinct area that should be included in conflict analyses, particularly where competition over ownership of land, and management of natural resources and commodities, are drivers of conflict, but most current tools regard these as issues that are covered as part of the political and economic analysis. The role of youth in relation to such issues is an under-researched area.

## 4.3. Political engagement

While the greed and grievance perspectives examine the reasons why youth take up arms, the third approach critically examines the nature of the politics that ‘prepared the field’ for conflict. Bates (2008) argued that ruling elites in many countries post-independence have been driven by the need to maintain a political power base by concentrating resources on a narrow section of the population, rather than developing policies to provide social goods such as education as a wider benefit for all. Drawing on examples from sub-Saharan Africa, Bates argued that post-independence elections were costly and incumbents preserved their position through the distribution of public goods. As it became too expensive to continue in this manner, ruling elites became more authoritarian. Under the new system, providing the constituency with public goods, including education, was no longer important. The goal of both incumbents and political opponents alike was to garner the favour of ruling elites, on which their chance of success and of being included in the narrowing ‘private distribution’ of material benefits depended. This centralized, closed, and regulated economy was costly, and in the long run meant a decrease in public revenue and fewer rewards from public services. This further entrenched the status of rulers as ‘predators’. Eventually, citizens react to this behaviour of their rulers by taking up arms.

Reno (2000, 2002, 2006) also examined the political decisions that led to a culture of patronage and the breakdown of the social contract. However, he emphasized the security concerns that ruling elites were facing. Faced with opposition from local political elites and strongmen, the fastest way to buy their loyalty was to distribute resources as patronage to key strongmen rather than as public goods in a universal way. Reno also differs from Bates in emphasizing a more deliberate political choice on the part of ruling elites to keep formal institutions weak, arguing that the elites fear administrators of strong institutions could garner political favour.

Both Bates and Reno document the ways in which rational, but self-interested, political decision-making by elites can lead to the demise of the social contract. They show how ruling elites have been driven by the need to maintain a political power base by concentrating resources on a narrow section of the population, rather than developing policies to provide social goods such as education as a wider benefit for all. The implication is that education programming should include good analysis of the political environment in which policies are being developed, and include programmes that promote wider political engagement of children and youth in understanding and participating in the political systems that operate within their communities.

#### **4.4. Youth bulges as a threat to security**

A fourth hypothesis linking youth, education, and conflict identifies youth bulges in a population as a threat to security. Much of this has been related to literature which posits a statistical relationship between high relative youth populations and the risk of armed conflict. The theory itself is not new: historical research has linked youth bulges to revolutions in seventeenth-century England, eighteenth-century France, and twentieth-century Indonesia (Goldstone, 2002; Moller, 1968), and to political activism in Western and Middle Eastern countries (Huntington, 1996). However, recent research highlights the ‘extremely robust’ correlation between countries with youth bulges and the incidence of political instability (Urdal, 2004: 16). Some scholars have attempted to determine the demographic ‘tipping point’: Huntington, for example, argues that societies are particularly vulnerable to war when the proportion of youth (aged 15 to 24 years) reaches a threshold of 20 per cent of the population (1996: 259–261). Others examine the conditions under which a youth bulge may lead to instability. For example, Urdal claims that while large numbers of youth can ‘boost an economy’, in the context of poorly performing economies and weak governance it can lead to violence (2004: 16).

In terms of links with education, Thyne (2006) found that the higher school enrolment rates are (the primary enrolment rate, secondary enrolment rate, and the male secondary enrolment rate), the lower is the probability of civil war. Among the three types of enrolment rates tested, the male secondary education enrolment rate was found to have the strongest effect. Similarly, Barakat and Urdal (2009) found that a large proportion of the population being young males is likely to increase the risk of conflict in societies *where male secondary education enrolment is low*, particularly in low and middle-income countries. However, there are also problems with programming that simply characterizes young males as a risk to security. Many agencies point out the difficulties in assuming that a relatively high proportion of youth in a population necessarily leads to conflict. For example, a USAID (2012b) technical brief on youth bulges and conflict recommended that ‘program staff should evaluate the strength of the underlying casual assumptions’ and other complexities that need to be considered based on analysis of the particular context.

There are nuances and variations related to all of these theories about the relationship between youth, education, and conflict. Few would argue that any particular set of factors provides a definitive link, which is why it is important that conflict analysis tools incorporate multiple factors that may help policymakers and practitioners decide on the most appropriate education programmes involving youth in conflict-affected environments.



## **5. Three peacebuilding challenges for policymakers**

In recent years many countries have implemented national legislation and strategies focused on youth, and documents have been produced to support the development of national youth policies (UNESCO, 2004). A *World atlas of youth policies* forms part of the support materials developed for the IIEP Policy Forum (IIEP-UNESCO, 2012). Given the complexities of the theoretical links between education, youth, and peacebuilding highlighted above, the purpose of this section is simply to highlight three questions that could provide starting points for policymakers related to youth programming from a peacebuilding perspective.

### **5.1. Is there a genuine commitment to youth engagement in peacebuilding?**

This may seem an obvious question, but from a peacebuilding perspective it is crucial. The literature on youth engagement is littered with criticisms of superficial and tokenistic approaches, and in the field of peacebuilding this is compounded by a tendency to characterize youth more as a risk to security than a resource for building peace and stability. Even where there is genuine commitment to youth engagement, there are added complexities in situations where violent conflict exists. Youth are not a homogeneous group that exist in isolation from conflict itself. Youth may be perpetrators as well as victims of violence, mobilized to fuel the conflict as well as motivated to end it. This presents significant challenges for genuine youth engagement in terms of identifying the multiplicity of youth perspectives on the conflict, the politics of who represents youth opinion, and which youth organizations receive funding and resources. Perhaps the greatest challenge is that peacebuilding inevitably involves bringing politically opposed or marginalized groups into dialogue. While peace agreements might represent new working arrangements between political elites, relapses into conflict are common, especially where younger generations do not see or experience the benefits of peace. Sustainable peace is therefore unlikely without youth commitment, since it is the youth who have the capacity to carry a conflict into the next generation. This means that difficult and sometimes unpopular decisions have to be made about how to achieve youth engagement that is inclusive of the full range of youth.

### **5.2. Is there commitment to conflict transformation and change?**

Peacebuilding theory places particular emphasis on the transformation of conflict by addressing underlying causes, rather than simply bringing about a cessation of violence. As the literature illustrates, there are multiple theories about the factors or conditions that might generate conflict, and youth have a vested interest in each of them. Whether the drivers of conflict are social inequalities, economic disadvantage, or political exclusion (or more likely a combination of these), these are reflected in the power relations that exist between people and groups within society. The peacebuilding perspective is that even when groups stop fighting there is the possibility of a return to violence without a change in the underlying social, economic, or political power relations.

Youth are particularly significant in relation to transformation and change. It is they who inherit the consequences of conflict or the benefits of peace agreements. If social inequalities remain unaddressed, while economic and political power relations remain unchanged, then youth themselves will continue to be divided along similar lines. The peacebuilding challenge is therefore about not just youth engagement, but youth engagement to bring about social, economic, and political transformations that are likely to be resisted by those who benefit from existing power relations. Youth may be divided on whether such changes can best be

achieved through violent or non-violent means, or indeed whether change is in their best interests, and these struggles necessitate engagement between peers as well as across generations.

### **5.3. What sort of youth programmes support peacebuilding?**

The highly context-specific nature of peacebuilding underscores the importance of programming based on thorough conflict analysis. Although development agencies often identify theories of change as part of programme design, these are rarely articulated from a peacebuilding perspective. One possible step in this direction is a critical review of programmes involving youth in terms of their relevance to social, economic, and political transformation from a peacebuilding perspective. For example, there are many youth peacebuilding programmes based on the idea that intercultural exchanges lead to reduced prejudice and improved relations between groups (Allport, 1954; Amir, 1976). The impact of these programmes has been the subject of much research (Gaertner, Dovidio, and Bachman, 1996; Horenczyk and Bekerman, 1997). Questions have been raised about the need to go beyond the level of superficial contact towards engaging youth in understanding the root causes of conflict and analysing power relations within society. Despite theory highlighting the importance of intergroup inequalities, many programmes have been accused of operating at the level of interpersonal exchange, which is unlikely to have an impact on broader social, institutional, and structural change in conflict-affected societies.

In terms of the contribution of economic change to peacebuilding, the literature highlights the importance of increasing potential livelihoods and therefore the opportunity cost to an individual of taking part in war. However, technical and vocational skills training (TVET) continues to receive criticism for not supplying skills relevant to the job market. In fact, it may even lead to the creation of grievances in the mismatch between aspirations and reality. Furthermore, attention to secondary school enrolment has arguably suffered in the international push towards basic education for all. Finally, given the constraints of the economic circumstances in which TVET programmes are implemented, they often receive criticism for not actually resulting in increased employment. From a peacebuilding perspective this is the critical issue. While training programmes that occupy youth may contribute to negative peace, without the creation of sustainable livelihoods there is no transformative effect. It can also raise discontent and fuel grievances as graduates of TVET schemes feel the training has not lived up to its promises.

Peacebuilding theory also highlights the importance of promoting political engagement and processes of political accountability. In practice, however, peacebuilding efforts have often been focused around youth awareness programmes in the lead-up to multiparty elections. Education also has a crucial role in terms of civic and citizenship education that can contribute to peacebuilding. While the content of civic education programmes varies from one context to another, they generally include three elements: civic knowledge, civic skills, and civic disposition (UNDP, 2010).

In practice programmes often put more emphasis on civic knowledge than on supporting active civic engagement. This is somewhat surprising given the number of youth seeking employment in humanitarian and development organizations, which in conflict-affected situations are often ‘the main institutions with a stable availability of regular work’ (Sommers, 2006: 26). There are now many examples of political engagement through the use of new media. Examples range from people using the internet to circulate blogs and upload

videos to express their political views, to the use of Twitter and email to put their questions to politicians. New media allow participants to communicate on an equal basis and raise issues that are of relevance to their lives. By putting youth in direct contact with politicians, they can also act as an important mechanism of accountability in support of political transformation.

Finally, the influence of the youth bulge theory and increasing global concerns about national security means youth programming is sometimes seen as a security response. Responses may involve stronger policing, profiling of youth, monitoring for radicalization (for critiques see Lakhani, 2011; Novelli, 2010), and programmes aimed towards diversion or occupying those 'who otherwise have very little to do' (Lyby, 2001: 247). From a peacebuilding perspective, the challenge is to bring about the conditions that sustain safety and security in local communities and the broader society. Security responses to a perceived youth threat can lead to increased hostility, particularly if the security response is viewed as being targeted towards one particular section of society. Given the often prominent role of youth during times of conflict, rebuilding their relations with the police and justice system can be an important part of the peacebuilding process. Security sector reform may involve restructuring of the police accompanied by education and training, but also offers the opportunity for programmes involving greater dialogue with youth about their perceptions and experience of policing, and how relations between youth and police might be transformed.

In conclusion, this final section has raised some critical questions about youth engagement in peacebuilding. From a peacebuilding perspective, key issues are how to ensure that multiple youth perspectives are included, and whether youth programmes are likely to bring about social, economic, or political transformations. Ultimately, these questions can only be tackled by addressing underlying causes of conflict in context, although Table 2 offers a framework that might be helpful.

**Table 2: A framework of key issues**

Sector	Conflict management 'negative peace' (absence of violence)	Peacebuilding 'positive peace' (address structural inequalities)
Social	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Intergroup contact</li> <li>• Intercultural encounters</li> <li>• Sports, drama, arts, music as bridge-builders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on inequalities and power relations between groups in society</li> <li>• Implementation of truth and reconciliation recommendations</li> </ul>
Economic	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TVET, apprenticeships</li> <li>• Financial settlements, reparations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• TVET linked to economic opportunities</li> <li>• Sustainable livelihoods for youth</li> </ul>
Political	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emphasis on political elites</li> <li>• Focus on elections and transmission of civic knowledge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political literacy</li> <li>• Youth civic engagement including through new media</li> </ul>
Security	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger policing</li> <li>• Youth profiling</li> <li>• Monitoring for radicalization</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved relations with police and security personnel</li> <li>• Greater confidence in justice system</li> </ul>

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